

MY STRUGGLES ABROAD FOR MY COUNTRY

BY

J. K. RAM.



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Foreword by
ARTHUR SKEFFINGTON, M.P.

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TO THE RANK AND FILE OF THE BRITISH LABOUR PARTY.

HAS THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT REALLY GIVEN FREEDOM TO INDIA?

Events have been moving so swiftly in India that I had thought it best to wait and give a considered opinion on the happenings of the past three months.

For over 25 years I had two main ambitions and I nursed these steadily and persistently; one was to help ardently the British Labour Party to bring it into power, and the other, to achieve freedom for my country through the Party. To me the achievement of one, is closely linked with the other.

I have been in the movement since 1919, working voluntarily without seeking any kind of publicity or favour, and giving up my own personal career. In the present Parliament, there are only a handful of Labour Members whom I knew in the early Twenties. Among them is my old and trusted friend Mr. Neil Maclean; and only one person left in Transport House, who still vividly remembers me. She is Miss O'Reilly.

I was and I am still jubilant over the victory of the Labour Party at the General Election of 1945. But am I really happy over the solution of India's problem? I often ask myself a question. It is this! Has the Labour Government given effect to the real wishes of the Rank and File of the Party? The answer has not been unequivocal.

Since 1922, I have been assiduously helping various Delegates at the Party's Annual Conferences to frame resolutions on India, and looking back, I well remember the real enthusiasm and sincerity displayed by most of the delegates, to give unqualified freedom to my country. Now, it is only natural for me, to express openly, whether my country has gained real independence by the passing of the Indian Independence Bill.

It is true, the Government has shown boldness on the face of increasing tension and grievous difficulties. It has shown, an honest purpose to hand over power to the Indians themselves; and this is being done with appropriate speed. To all this, I give credit. But is the Government settlement the best and wisest? Does it create the desired unity of Indians, without which the whole scheme becomes a farce; or has it placed a great premium on

conflicts among the various communities? Is this solution, that seems convenient now, and appears as a happy relief, not exposed in the long run to grievous and permanent danger?

What are the difficulties that are facing ahead—would it have been better for the Government to stick to the original Cabinet Mission's plan?

At the outset, I admit, without any reservation, that the present Government inherited the accumulated errors and intrigues of the past Governments; to a good deal it has been the victim of circumstance outside its own power to control; but all the same, the verdict of history will prove, whether the Balkanisation of India is the wisest and the best solution, that the Labour Government could offer to my country. Will India in time become another Ireland?

The division is bound to deepen the divergencies between the two communities; it means also an economic weakening of the country, since it separates the agricultural regions from the industrial area; it tears railways and irrigation systems into two. I could not do better than quote the "Daily Herald" of the 5th July, over this division of my country: "For what the world needs today, is not division into more and smaller economic and political units; but on the contrary more collective organisations for both and collective ends."

The new scheme is a surrender to the second best. It would have been better, to stick to the ideal of a united Government with adequate interest of various communities; instead the chances are, my country would disintegrate. In addition to the two main communities, there will be many minor segments.

There are endless opportunities for mischievous intrigues in the settlement, that could certainly be exploited.

The British Government is placing itself in such a situation, that it is bound to get involved to be the partisan of one party and ally against another, and this would turn out to be most disastrous.

And the hardest of the still unsolved problem, is that of the Prince: no clean cut statement has come out from the Government about these out-of-date despots. They are existing on the moth-eaten treaties, that were contracted long ago; and this, even without the consent of Parliament. Apparently they are free to bargain; thus setting up a form of political auction.

The Government has no doubt, received premature rejoicing and praise from many unexpected quarters. Time alone will prove, whether this has any justification; and even leading papers, have come out with self-complacent editorials.

A far-sighted policy would have saved India from the imminent peril, which she now faces. The two new Governments will start life under a danger of being involved in rivalries, calculated to weaken one or the other, or perhaps both; and all this could have been averted. Even now, the British Government, after handing over power, should do its utmost to bring the two parties together, now that Mr. Jinnah has got what he wanted. Everything depends upon the way in which the Government fulfils its pledges. It is Mahatma Gandhi who said "That the Government would be judged by their action in following the Bill, rather than in its language, however generous or just it might read."

It is true, the Congress leaders gave way to the partition of India under every strain, but the mere acceptance of the thing in principle cannot be relied on to banish the danger. The difficulties still ahead of them, are most formidable. Take for instance, the Indian Army, a divided army from the standpoint of Indian unification is utterly retrograde; a non-communal force is more than ever needed today. How can the defence be discharged efficiently on three or more separate frontiers.

Economic circumstances and the present state of international affairs make the unity of India still more necessary.

What then should the Labour Cabinet do, to avert a catastrophe for which the future generation will blame it for ever. Having divided India the best it can do is to endeavour and do its utmost not to interfere either directly or indirectly, or take sides openly or secretly, with one party or the other. This is the best service it can do at this juncture.

Above all, as the present Labour Government have been elected to protect the interests of the workers, I ask them if they have in any form safeguarded the interests of their fellow-workers; or have they left them at the mercy of the Indian capitalists? Mr. Sparks, the Member for Acton, I am glad to note, has been very much concerned about this.

Have the Government done anything in the last two years of office, or lifted one finger, to improve, or do away with sweated labour in my country? In time to come, the Government will be forced to account for and justify its actions.

And in the meantime I shall continue to issue these bulletins as occasions arise.

August 1st, 1947.

J. K. RAM.

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MY STRUGGLES ABROAD

FOR MY COUNTRY

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Foreword.

It gives me great pleasure to write a short foreword to this most interesting book.

Mr. Ram has been a member of the Labour Party since 1919 and from this time his expressed aims have been to work constantly to bring the Party to power, and to obtain freedom for India through a Labour Government.

This book gives a brief account of his experiences and impressions. I am sure, that it will be of interest to the people who, like Mr. Ram, desire "an independent India to co-operate with Britain for their mutual benefit" and I also take this opportunity of wishing it every success.

Melrose M.P.

MY PURPOSE

My object in writing this small booklet is two-fold; one is to appeal to and inspire the younger generation of my country, and the other to urge earnestly the British workers and their leaders to fulfil the pledges given so often to my people.

To the young and enlightened, on your shoulders lies the heavy burden of shaping our country's destiny; you should use your youthful gusto in proper channels for the benefit of the whole community. You have the power, zest and drive to bring about the unity that is so essential for the welfare of our country; you and you alone can establish peace between the great communities, and make my cherished ambition a reality, viz., the independence for which I have been dreaming and toiling abroad for years.

Not long ago at a College Hostel in Northern India, a group of Hindu and Moslem students organised themselves and marched to the town and averted an impending communal disturbance. What a glorious piece of service this was. Small as this incident may be, this is the key to the Indian's chief problem.

I appeal to you, the youths of India to form into groups in villages and towns and march together as true brothers of one family, thus setting a noble example to others, then the world's attention will be focussing on your activities. A country-wide chain of youth organisations is most essential for solving the social and economic evils that exist today.

Our country is at present in a state of lop-sided economy based on primitive agriculture, peasantry wedded to ancient methods and ignorantly opposed to well-meant schemes. It is economically sick and politically feverish.

The recent communal disturbances are deliberately brought about and the present daily intemperances are disquieting. In the past and at the moment, no serious

attempt is made to bring about the desired unity and if there is any, it is meagre, halting, deadlock continues, and its decisions often guided by pure expedience.

I am fully convinced that only the youth movements, well-organised all over the country will solve the communal problem of India. This is by far a better way of solving any problem than the use of violence and brute force. The strange thing is, neither a Hindu nor a Moslem wishes to be governed by a foreign rule, then, why prolong this by quarrelling amongst ourselves.

Now comes my appeal to the British people. I have lived and toiled amongst you for the greater part of my life; I have an inner admiration for the working class, and my close association with them has convinced me that they always respond to a just cause. Here is a golden opportunity for them to show the whole world that a Labour Government is not out to exploit my country. Through their various organisations they should make their pressure felt and opinions heard; and by doing this India will be free and both the British and Indian workers will benefit from such an action.

As one who is deeply interested in the welfare of the British workers for over twenty years, and as one who has worked for their betterment all these years, I urge them to take notice of the rapid changes that are taking place all over the world. I want them to think for themselves and guide their leaders. Do not let the leaders do all the thinking. Western civilisation and ethics are challenged by the invention of deadly weapons and let us avoid getting into the turmoil of power politics; and above all, be vigilant and see that India's freedom is not dumped into a cold storage. There is no earthly use of the government speaking loudly about India's freedom, and then shy off at the fence of solution. Up to now the Labour Cabinet has to be congratulated for its enterprise and consistency

MY STRUGGLES ABROAD

FOR MY COUNTRY.

Chapter I

"For centuries our civilisation was renowned, but today we are reduced to slavery and are forced by foreign domination to become hewers of wood and drawers of water."

This was the sentence I heard from the great Indian patriot and statesman, Gokhale, when I was a little boy. I was returning from the Zoological Gardens with a play-mate of mine when I saw a huge gathering outside the Victoria Hall. I was moved by his speech, and that was the beginning of my political awakening.

At the Madras Christian College, where I was a student for a number of years, I was helped by professors, mostly Scottish, to develop an independent mind and spirit. As a monitor in several classes I imbued my classmates with this same spirit; and how well I remember so many of them—loyal friends—and how I long to trace them; some are now holding very high positions.

The first reaction during my early schooldays was the privilege enjoyed by the Europeans and Eurasians in the railway trains; I took it into my head that somehow I must put an end to this anomaly. In those days I was very mischievous, and with a group of classmates used to go deliberately into those reserved compartments, to put an end to this abuse; and what a lot of fun we had in doing this.

Chapter 2

Then came my sojourn to England. As a youngster, and with a definite frame of mind, I began to take stock of my new surroundings. One thing that no Indian student can avoid noticing is the stare that you get from the people in Britain. There are two kinds: one is harmless, inquisitive, and sometimes even appreciative, and the other a deliberately rude one that comes mostly from some of the ill-bred Britishers who have been to India to earn their living. I had to fight many a battle against this kind of rudeness, at times using force.

The colossal ignorance exhibited by the British people about India, to which they owe so much, is remarkable. All that they know, or all that they are taught and meant to know, is that India is a country with wild animals, that Hindus and Mahommedans are killing each other every day, that there are conflicting elements and jarring creeds, clamouring in twenty-two languages; and that the British are there to protect the "natives" and civilize them.

Now the word "civilization," has a peculiar significance to an Englishman. Was it not Milton's complacent remark that "when there is anything great to be done God reveals it to just one of his Englishmen"? He is convinced that civilisation is English, and, as Bernard Shaw once put it, from an Englishman's point of view, that it broadens out from precedent to precedent, getting grander every day, until it practically grows up to the heavens.

It would be just as well for an Englishman to reflect occasionally, and correspondingly be more careful in his conduct and behaviour, that the very powers that created him and others might make it their primary duty to exterminate his pride. English civilization is nothing short

of code of behaviour set up by a few privileged classes, and the proletariat follow it blindly.

Man's belief is on the surrounding assumption, on which he invariably acts, and once you change this he acts as a different man. It would be more honest and less hypocritical if an Englishman admitted that he goes to India for his own benefit or that of his country.

Almost within a few days of setting foot in England you become conscious that you are a subject race, and this is branded on your face and colour. This feeling grows on you, and if you are of a very sensitive nature (and I am very proud of being so) eventually it makes you burst into action. Action it has been in my case ever since the Amritsar massacre.

A group of Indian students of my own calibre and temperament came out openly and fought for our rights. Many a pitched battle we had in the Clubs, restaurants and other places, to establish our rights. We had to use violence when we were compelled to: passive resistance is taken as cowardice in England, and so one is forced to fight.

On one occasion the whole of London's evening papers brought out an incident that happened to me, and in fact some of the Tory Press desired that I should be convicted for assault on an Englishman in the Capital of the British Empire.

This was due entirely to the manager of a shop who was rude to me and my doctor friends, and when I requested him to be more courteous, he threatened to put me out and when I refused he assaulted me and my retaliation took a stronger form and as a result he had to be taken to hospital.

The case came before the Chief Magistrate and I pleaded I was only defending myself. In consequence of this, the Indians received better attention and service in the shops.

Chapter 3

⁹ It was in the year, 1919, whilst I was a student at Edinburgh University, that my work for my country began. Dr. Sapru, the late Satyamurthi, and others, visited Edinburgh and I arranged meetings for them.

The latter was a violent Nationalist during his early days. It was in the same year that I first met the late Rt. Honourable William Graham, who represented Central Edinburgh in the Parliament. I met him whilst trying to help an unemployed man. It was this contact that changed my whole life and career. Mr. Graham was a member of the Labour Party, a new party with high ideals and definitely pledged to give freedom to my country, and he strongly induced me to join the Party, and to work within it to liberate my country. I did this at the expressed wish of this man, whose sincerity was unquestionable, and whose memory I will always cherish. I was convinced at the time that India must be free at any cost, and I was concentrating on the methods of achieving it.

⁵ The following year was a very memorable one, and I was fortunate enough to be thrown constantly into the company of Bala-Gangathara-Tilak, a great patriot and a bitter opponent of British rule in India. On one point I disagreed with him: he gave preference to political, rather than social problems.

¹ Between 1921 and 1922 I became the Secretary of the
² Indian Association, which was the only independent institution that existed in those days, with a membership of over 300. I thought, as students, we should mix with British colleagues and exchange ideas; so for the first time I arranged socials and debates with them. A unique debate with the British students was arranged, the subject being that Gandhi's non-co-operation policy was the best

method. This motion was carried with a big majority. At the same time I induced my countrymen to take an active part in sports, and the Edinburgh Indian Cricket Team almost created a record that year by winning most of the matches.

About the same period my services were required by the local and surrounding Labour Party organisations. During those meetings I invariably led the audience to put questions to me on India, as I wanted them to think. I arranged also political meetings with Professor Berriedale Keith, Mr. Graham, M.P., and other prominent men.

Just then the late Rt. Honourable Edwin Montague, the Secretary for India, had resigned his office, and I was a great believer in him; to help him in his election I went down to Cambridge and spoke on the same platform.

From the year 1923 I began to take a greater interest in the British Labour movement, addressing meetings all over the country. My contact with the British workers convinced me that there was every hope of getting my country's freedom through them.

It was this, and this connection alone, that made me give up my own personal career and put all my energy into the development of the British Labour Party. I happened to be the youngest speaker ever sent out in 1923 from the headquarters of the Labour Party.

At the Conference held in Edinburgh, Mr. Lansbury, an ardent and most sincere advocate of India's freedom, brought up the Indian question, and in this he was supported by many delegates who were my personal friends. We had informal meetings before the Conference, and arranged to bring forward a definite motion on India. In those days the Labour Party was only too anxious to have the help and support of Indians to preach and spread their doctrine.

The advent of the first Labour Government in 1924 gave me a wonderful thrill and hope, but this was soon shattered when Ramsay Macdonald sent an uncalled for and harsh message to my people. The moment he became Prime Minister he seemed to have forgotten all his promises and goodwill towards India. Some of the Labour Cabinet Ministers who spoke freely on India before they took office became dumb, and this was distressing to me, as I wanted to get so many things done through them for my country. How disappointed I was at that time is revealed in the following letter written by Mr. Graham:

TREASURY, S.W.,

105, SUNNY GARDENS,
HENDON,

23rd April, 1924.

LONDON, N.W.4.

Dear Mr. Ram,

"Thank you for your kind letter of 14th April. I know your good work for the Movement in this country and greatly regret that you should feel that one or two of the members of the present Cabinet have been indifferent.

If, however, you think I can make any representations to them in the matter I shall gladly try on hearing from you again, but it might be easier if you tell me exactly what request you would like to make, so that I could see whether it could be conceded. You will be familiar with the recent debate on India in the House of Commons. I do not know how far that will supply a programme, but no doubt you will kindly let me know.

If you still wish an interview I might try to arrange it after the Easter recess, but I am sure you realise my very great difficulty in the present pressure of work. With kind regards,"

Yours sincerely,

(Sgnd) WILLIAM GRAHAM

Lansbury was the only man who stood out in the year 1924, championing the cause of India. I led a deputation to the Government on the notorious Rowlett Act, but the Government gave a lame excuse, saying that they had not a majority in the Parliament to carry this through; and Lord Olivier, who was the Secretary of State for India, was a Civil Servant himself, and he was dominated by the permanent officials at the India Office. This was apparent from a letter he wrote to me, defending the India Office.

The sudden ignominious end of the Government in the same year and the advent of the reactionary Tories with a huge majority broke my spirit, and for a time I was very depressed. Even the British workers began to lose confidence in their leaders. The appalling conditions of the unemployed drew my attention more and more.

Men like Brockway, Housman, and Lansbury raised the Indian problem at various meetings, and a few of us kept the home fires burning in England between the years 1925 and 1927. Of course, that able veteran speaker, Saklatvala, was there in the Parliament at the time, pounding the Tories whenever he had a chance.

A peculiar incident happened at the time he was a Member of Parliament. He was due to address the Indian Students at Gower Street on a certain day. For some unknown reason the India Office wanted the Warden of the Indian Students Hostel to stop this meeting, and when the students gathered to hear Saklatvala they found the hall closed and private detectives were placed all round the hall. I happened to be standing next to Saklatvala and his wife and suddenly I asked, "Why not squat on the floor and proceed with the meeting," and this was done to the amazement of the Police officers and the Warden.

In the summer of 1925 I was taking a special course at St. Andrew's University. Just then the India Office, under Lord Birkenhead, began a drive to recruit candidates for the Indian Civil Service, and when prominent speakers visited St. Andrew's for this purpose I torpedoed them with questions, with disastrous effects. At the same time I wrote a frank article in the University Magazine. Here are some extracts from that article:

"It is senseless to pretend that Britain is governing India for India's own benefit."

"Since when has Britain been disposed to be so charitable?"

"It is need, and purely need, that has brought the Britishers to India."

"Indians do not wish to be governed by Britain any more than any self-respecting people care to be governed by any nation other than their own."

"Britain, no doubt, has committed a series of hideous blunders in India."

"What I would suggest to most of the British students is not to accept the imaginative and mischievous stories that are often circulated by those Britishers who, after all, have been to India to earn their living; and books on India are too often written solely from the British point of view."

"This article in the University Magazine created a stir, and to this Professor Cameron Morrison, who was in India for a long time, replied in the next issue, this taking the form of a personal, abusive attack. As a result the Principal, Sir James Irwing had to intervene and appeal to me not to take any further notice.

During 1927, I had the satisfaction, and to some extent took a pride in, helping to pass the Resolution during the Labour Party Conference held at Blackpool; and this Resolution was formulated by a few of us and accepted by Ramsay Macdonald, which advocated that India should almost at once become an equal partner, with her consent, in the British Commonwealth of Nations.

To bring about this resolution, a meeting was held on a particular night and this lasted until the early hours of the morning. Peculiarly enough, a few of the members who, originally were willing to take part and advocated this motion, suddenly began to retreat, and it was a long and weary job to persuade them to give their consent in the end.

The Simon Commission was appointed, and it was typical of Lord Birkenhead displaying his characteristic

arrogance, that the Commission did not include one single Indian, and no serious, national minded Indian took any notice of it.

Chapter 4

In the same year I went to America, and at that time Miss Mayo was busy cashing in on her book, "Mother India." It was at the express desire of the Americans that I went through her book—and how could any Indian keep quiet without raising a voice in protest against this cheap advertising woman. The book was a best seller chiefly owing to the vulgar sensation it created, and the Press would not and did not write anything detrimental to the book. So I asked some of my countrymen to get something done against the sale of this filthy book; and having received no positive response, I decided to stage a demonstration by myself, with the help of an Austrian friend.

In January, 1928, Miss Mayo was speaking at the Town Hall in New York, on women chiefly and the cattle of India; and here was a chance for me.

I printed small leaflets, quoting the opinions of the Americans and Indians against the book, and walked up and down outside the Town Hall, during a stormy, snowy morning, in my Indian clothes, with a placard written: "Miss Mayo exposed."

This demonstration had an immediate effect. The very Press that did not act seriously against the book came out with headlines giving a detailed description of what I had done against the book. A few copies of "Mother India" were burned as a protest. I was arrested and locked up for this action, but it never hurt me, for my country's cause is greater than my personal suffering.

Owing to the demonstration I was asked to speak all over America on the book and I even challenged Miss Mayo at a meeting, asking her what she proposed doing with the money she made on the book and she replied, "Any money derived from the sales of her book in India would be given to the Indians." Naturally very few Indians could buy this book.

Now the Americans are a very generous people, and they love to hear both sides of any question. I have addressed many meetings, all over America, and the deep interest with which they wish to know and learn all about India is definitely a healthy sign. I remember an occasion when three or four colleagues collectively requested me to address a meeting on Mahatma Gandhi. The deep silence with which those boys and girls heard me, stirred and impressed me. I feel certain that Americans on the whole, if they are enlightened on India by Indians, will be of great help in the gaining of our freedom.

Chapter 5

I returned at the beginning of 1929 to England, and straight away I went tramping all the way to South Wales, to help the unemployed. The object of this mission was to get a first hand knowledge of the unemployment, and also to gather facts as I proceed on foot. I set out without any preparations for my bodily care and walked to the places where unemployment was rife. For one week I travelled westward meeting wanderers and unemployed labourers.

Being unused to such a task I collapsed and was in hospital for some time. This suffering gave me confidence and also infused the workless to have greater faith in me. Over 250,000 miners passed resolutions in favour of my schemes, and asked me to lead a deputation to the Government. I interviewed the late Rt. Honourable Arthur

Henderson on the unemployment question, and in May, 1929, I was sent by the present Lord Shepherd to address meetings all over England. In places like Loughborough; Leeds and Nottingham the electors raised the question of India and wanted to know more about the worker's conditions

The return of the second Labour Government without an absolute majority was a disappointment to me. All the same the increased numbers gave me hope that salvation for my country was near at hand. My old friend, Graham, became the President of the Board of Trade, and his wife, Margaret Graham, came out openly advocating India's independence. This was to some extent embarrassing to her husband, who was in the Cabinet.

Many Labour Members of Parliament requested me to return to India almost at once to gather some information, and I did so. I spent three months interviewing various leaders and pressmen, and returned to England to contact my colleagues in the Labour Movement.

There was a good deal of positive discussion between selected Labour Members of Parliament and Liberals. The Liberals were more or less basing their arguments on the Simon Report. It was at times very difficult to convince them.

In my mind the appointment of Wedgewood Benn as Secretary of State for India was a mistake. He was a convinced Liberal for a long period, and a new recruit for the Labour Party, and as such he could not cast away the Victorian Liberalism easily. He was timid and vacillating in many of his approaches to the Indian problem. There was a strong feeling against him from the back benchers, and but for Ramsay Macdonald he would no doubt have come into a good deal of hostile criticism.

Several times I raised the issue of the behaviour of some of the British troops at Midnapur through Members of

Parliament; I also brought to the notice of the Government the Whitely Report, pointing out the standard of the Indian labourer, his poverty, and the low level of his efficiency.

Brockway, a complete exponent of Indian freedom, came out in the open and declared that unless the Labour Government took a decisive step in the settlement of Indian affairs it would have to face, before long, a grave crisis. And this forecast was proved correct according to the events in India. Because he fervently insisted on being heard on facts, he was forthwith suspended from the Parliament, and this exasperated the Labour supporters. It was a major upset, and did great harm to the Government.

At home and abroad the record of the second Labour Government was one of pitiable ineptitude. Unemployment steadily grew, and wages fell gradually. The Ministers clung to their offices without dignity or decency, barren of power and prestige.

At the Round Table Conference the delegates betrayed amazing differences on details of fundamental importance.

The Ministers held the information they obtained from their agents in India as gospel truth. This led to false judgments, and as Mahatma Gandhi declared on his homeward journey, "There is no nation on earth equal to the British in the capacity for self-deception." The Conference failed signally in its object and definitely proved another hoax.

- 31 This is not all: the greatest tragedy to the British workers and to the Labour Movement occurred when their leader betrayed them outright. There is no parallel to this in British history. Ramsay Macdonald, the pacifist, became Ramsay Macdonald, the militant. He began to

rule India by ordinances; Indians had to endure the indignities, sufferings and atrocities perpetrated on them. In the course of five weeks forty thousand Indians, women and children included, were arrested. Arrest at sight was the order of the day. Anyone was arrested and any property seized on mere suspicion. In a few days the whole of India was turned into an armed camp. A boy of twelve was flogged with twelve strokes for peacefully picketing outside the Bombay Gold Mint. This ruthless barbarousness shocked me beyond endurance; I gave all the information I had at my disposal to Morgan Jones and Lansbury. Questions were asked in Parliament, and vague replies were given by the Secretary for India. At the same time vigorous and systematic propaganda was launched in England.

Never have I witnessed before such a stream of articles in the Press, hostile to the Indian aspirations. Lord Rothermere published and sold for one penny a book called "Daily Mail Blue Book on the Indian Crisis." Here are a few outstanding sentences from his book:

"India is Britain's best buyer. She takes eighty-five million pounds worth of our exports every year. Four shillings in the £ of the income of every man and woman in Britain is drawn directly or indirectly from India."

32 "If you wipe out India it will be the end of Britain as a great power. India is not only the biggest jewel in the British Crown; she is the white sapphire pivot which supports the whole complicated movement of our national economic system. If we lose India we lose our imperial standing among the nations of the world. We want no more surrenders to Indian agitators."

So the cat was out of the bag and I held on to this book (I still have it in my possession) to show it to the workers of Britain. At the same time a new recruit to this

regime of vast propaganda stepped in—and it was no other than Winston Churchill, then thrown out of office.

I have always held the belief that Winston will take any brief from anyone that brings him to the limelight. He seized this opportunity and became the loudspeaker for the die-hards. I remember his using a slogan during the Westminster bye-election that Gandhi was watching that election.

He joined a small group of die-hards, like Sir Alfred Knox, Sir Henry Page-Croft, and others, to agitate against their own accredited leader, Mr. Baldwin. His speech on the White Paper betrayed his own self. He used his rhetorical guns only to bring out his past commitments. He tried his best to obliterate the part he played in bringing about the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms, and he blamed Lord Halifax for ever using the words, "Dominion Status," and thus misleading the Indian people.

Now let us trace back the speech that Churchill made when he was a colleague in the Lloyd George Cabinet.

"We all know how tremendous was the contribution which India made in the War of 1914. We owe India a deep debt, and I look forward confidently to the days when the Indian Government and people will have achieved fully and completely their Dominion Status."

When my friend, Morgan Jones, pointed out this speech to Churchill, he replied that he used the phrase, "Dominion Status" in a ceremonial sense. This retort or reply only reveals the real honesty and integrity of a man who has played and is playing a great part in British politics.

I always feel it would do him a world of good if Churchill would glance retrospectively, not occasionally but often, at his own past record.

Lansbury, who wound up for the opposition during the debate, spoke brilliantly, and asked the National Government to clear its mind of the idea that Britain alone could best govern India, and added that the Government had not succeeded in managing their own affairs.

Chapter 6

34 I returned to India in 1934 and found India in a very passive mood. I toured round various rural districts and discovered, to my surprise, the political enlightenment of the peasants, who form nearly 90 per cent of the population.

Cultivation and irrigation was still in a very primitive stage in most cases, and this resulted in periodical famine all over the country. I discussed this with the Ministers in Madras and the reply was the shortage of finance.

On my return to England I found the Indian Empire Society—a very reactionary body consisting mostly of sun-parched Anglo-Indians and British servicemen who were still eating India's salt—very active. Churchill was their mouthpiece at this time, and he delivered an ill-advised, venomous speech rousing racial animosity.

I was surprised that even Baldwin, after defending the White Paper in the Parliament, came out in his true colours. This was the speech he made during the special meeting of the Central Council of the Conservative and Unionist Association on December 4th, 1934:

"It is my considered judgment in all the changes and chances of this wide world today, that you have a good chance of keeping the whole of the sub-continent of India in the Empire for ever."

This amazing statement was from a man who professed high ideals, and it revealed the naked truth, that England never wished to give up India.

The question of India was now predominantly before the eyes of the people of England. This does not mean that the people had been enlightened to any true degree concerning the conditions of the Indian people. The Press paraded the illusion of benevolent British rule, and it was for the Indians to counter-act such a monstrous stream of propaganda. Believe me, it was not an easy job.

The series of abortive Round Table Conferences and the White Paper issued by the joint committee had not the slightest effect on the average thinking Indian; the amendment of the Labour Party to the White Paper was sugar-coated with democratic phraseology, and I protested against this to several members of the Labour Party.

The new Constitution, to my mind, enslaved my people more than ever. Safeguards, additional powers, special responsibilities and weapons of repression—all these nullified any progress that had been made already.

I spoke against the White Paper in the Midlands, South Wales, and at meetings organised by the British section of the League against Imperialism.

Although I took part in the General Election of 1935, the British electors were indifferent to their own problems, and much less interested in India.

The peasant revolt in India took a serious turn in 1936, and the Congress at Lucknow declared that the appalling poverty of the people, unemployment, and the suffering of peasants, were most urgent problems.

The myth that the British were losing their interest in India was easily negated by the fact that in 1911 British investments in India constituted 11 per cent of its overseas holdings. By 1936 it had risen to 25 per cent; in addition to this, huge profits (booty squeezed out of India and then "invested" there) and other funds were coming

to London annually, such as payments for British troops, Indian Government orders for supplies, Guaranteed Bond Payments, and Civil Service salaries and pensions.

No wonder Churchill made a Trans-Atlantic radio address to the American people, and explained to them that England cannot afford to give up India, "because two out of every ten Englishmen depend on India"; and hence the ruling class of Britain never agrees to give up its basis of existence.

The public debt of India gradually increased about 10 per cent each year for a number of years, while the National Income was about 1 per cent each year.

17 The election manifesto of the Congress in 1937 was an inspiring one. The new orientation towards political radical economic reforms and mass unity, was the driving force, and its true exponent, Pandit Nehru, became a national idol. In one year alone, the Congress membership rose from 600,000 to 3,000,000—a remarkable achievement—and this gave me new hopes for my country. Almost universal praise was accorded to the Congress Ministers, who administered the provinces.

The introduction of agrarian and Labour reforms pleased me greatly, and also the restoration of Civic liberty and increase of wages.

But in some provinces Congress Ministers showed excessive deference to Western influence, such as the Bihar Ministry's entering into a pact with the landlords. This alienated peasant support; and also the introduction in Bombay of a Trade Disputes Bill, which amounted to an infringement of the right to strike.

These actions were brought to the notice of the British Labour Movement and meetings were held in England to protest against these measures. I remember speaking at

Birmingham, at the request of the British factory workers. Some of them were furious at the action of the Congress Ministers.

The State People's Movement, embracing one fourth of India's population, became a genuine People's Movement, and swept the country. Demonstrations were held everywhere, with the help of the people from the provinces. To suppress these the British intervened with lathi charges. The Congress Ministers sank into complacency, and Pandit Nehru condemned their actions.

The Indians in London had the good fortune to get in contact with that bold and far-seeing patriot, Subhas Chandra-Bose. At a meeting held in London he told the Labour leaders, such as Greenwood, Lansbury and Miss Wilkinson, who were sitting on the right and on the left of Mr. Bose, that the Indians never looked for, or expected, any help, even from Labour sympathisers. He explained with clarity the problem of India; and how proud many of us were to hear him.

Chapter 7

With the outbreak of war, India's aspirations were doomed further. With the resignation of the Congress Ministers, the Governors began to rule by proclamation. The defence of India Ordinance was promulgated. Open conflicts raged in growing intensity within a few weeks.

England had everything to gain by giving India her freedom at this time, at the commencement of the war. She could have gained the American and neutral opinion by showing that she was fighting for real freedom and democracy, by equal friendship and alliance between two peoples. Mankind would have benefitted, and yet England threw away this golden opportunity.

The position of Indians in England was to some extent untenable. We were loyal to our country, and at the same time we could not remain inactive in England when the whole country was mobilising to fight against dictatorship. I volunteered for the Civil Defence, but met with a serious accident in the black-out, and this invalided me for a considerable period.

The advent of Winston Churchill as Prime Minister was a calamity for my country. His actions in the past made us shiver, and this fear was later justified by his activities. He was true to his earlier statement that "sooner or later you will have to crush Gandhi and the India Congress and all they stand for."

By July, 1941 many thousands were imprisoned, including 28 ex-Ministers, and 290 elected members of Legislature. To create a breathing space in which to prepare more efficacious measures for crushing the Indians, he initiated the gigantic fraud of Cripps' mission.

In doing this he was very clever and far-seeing to send out of the way, on a hopeless mission, a man who might have succeeded him as Prime Minister; and true enough, this would have happened when Tobruk fell, and when the feeling, both in the country and in Parliament, was gathering momentum against him. The mission was also meant to create the illusion that Britain was willing to give India her freedom, and to delude a large section of the British and American working class.

Inherent in the whole plan of Cripps' Mission was the fundamental fact that the real power was to rest in the hands of the Viceroy, through the continuation of his power of veto. It was apparent that the Cripps' errand was a face saving formula, and hence its total failure.

If the main object of the mission was to grant freedom to India, then the terms of the fulfilment should have taken

a different shape. Professor Coupland who was attached to Cripp's staff during his mission to India, says in his book that the object of the mission was to explain to the Indian Leaders the Government's proposals.

Surely that was not the time and place for taking such a course. India was at the time committed to the War against the peoples will and there were "Dummy" Indian Ministers ready to sell themselves. They were out of the main current of Indian nationalism. The distrust and the strained patience with which the Congress Leaders had to put up with led to the obdurate refusal, and its taking any share in the war effort.

The august offer of Churchill betrayed his own sincerity. Not one of the promises in that offer were straight forward. The promises were conditional. There were many unequivocations.

The "Moth-eaten" Treaties with the puppets of the British Government namely the Princes, were inserted. The most patent defect in the offer of the British Government was in substance amounted to a total denial of the freedom for the Indian people to determine their own future.

Empty promises and faked concessions left India cold. The workers of Britain at last began to realise that the Indians regard the British, not as liberators but as alien invaders and oppressors. The farce of a "war of freedom," while thousands were locked up, was fast becoming evident to the working classes.

This new awakening of the British workers was also true of the British soldiers of whom came from the working class. In India the soldiers' eyes have been opened to things they never knew before. The Maharajahs, the Aga Khan, and all the glittering things they were supposed to

have seen, were not there. They have seen the poverty and oppression on a large scale.

I discussed this with some of them; they were united in their opinion that independence should be given to India at once. The Civil Defence people with whom I constantly came in contact, and who organised meetings for me, were, without any reserve, unanimously in favour of granting freedom to India, and they were surprised when Churchill began to twist the terms of the Atlantic Charter, saying that it applied chiefly to Europe.

In its preamble the Charter distinctly lays down the following sentence:

"The right of all peoples to choose the form of Government under which they will live, and the wish to see self government and sovereign rights restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them."

On September, 1941, Churchill shocked the world opinion by saying that the Charter did not apply to India, and yet the present Prime Minister, who was the Deputy Prime Minister then, spoke three weeks prior to Churchill's declaration, and three days after the Charter was signed by Roosevelt and Churchill.

In an address to West African students in London on the 15th August—and this speech was reported in the "Daily Herald"—he said that "black peoples as well as white will share the benefits of the Churchill-Roosevelt Atlantic Charter." He also said that, "the freedom and social society for which we fought should honour all mankind."

Do you wonder then the distinct distrust displayed by the Indians to the declaration and promises made to them on various occasions?

Between the years of 1943-45, British public opinion paid very little attention to Indian problems, and was, in addition, starved of any information about the developments in India.

A few members like Sorenson, Cove and Davies, raised questions in the Parliament, and invariably got a very evasive reply from that conceited, bigoted, Mr. Amery, who was then the Secretary of State for India; the defeat of this arrogant man in the General Election of 1945, gave me great relief and joy, as I spoke in Birmingham during the election. I remember a Labour Member of Parliament describing him as "short in stature and short in policies also."

During this time the British soldiers had entered Indian cities and villages, and they had taken stock of things. They saw poverty, disease, and India became a new meaning to them. Impressions had to be revised. They have witnessed scenes they would have thought incredible. They were neither impressed nor amused by the lectures given to them as to how they should behave towards the "natives." They saw men and women of the textile mills crowded in tenement buildings, housing three or four families in each tiny room. They have witnessed the scenes of famine, and all this information has been sent home to their wives, sweethearts and parents. This aroused public opinion in England, and courageous Stuart and Emery of the "News Chronicle" cleared the snow-screen by bringing out the whole truth.

It was difficult for the Indians to come out openly to express any hostile criticism of the Government at this time, when England itself was fighting a life and death struggle; and yet we had a few public meetings.

Here I must draw attention to the existing opinion, or I should say organised opinion, of Indians in England.

One must give credit to our friend, Mr. Menon, who kept the home fire burning for a number of years. It was not him that we objected to but the India League and its origin. The present India League was known previously as the "Commonwealth of India League." The then Joint-Secretary, James Morley, condoned in the Parliament the use of tear gas bombs during the civil disturbance campaign. The other, Mr. Peter Freeman, who was Chairman of the League for two years, stood against the release of political prisoners in India. Could you wonder, then, that politically minded Indians kept aloof from such a body?

Then Krishna Menon took sole charge, and we must give credit to him for his activities. But all the same, we must deplore his attitude towards other Indians, or bodies, that are trying to promote unity and bring freedom to our country by united action. His non-co-operative attitude, specially with other organisations who are fighting for the same cause, is deplorable, and I myself have spoken to Sorenson, an ardent and sincere friend of India, to induce Krishna Menon to be more amiable and co-operative with other Indians. Perhaps in time to come he will realise his folly and be more helpful.

I, personally, favour one united organisation for all Indians, and this should be a model one. I pray my wish will come true in the near future.

Chapter 8

945 I will return to the memorable year of 1945. This year has brought so many surprises; one is the defeat of Churchill and the Tories, and the other the advent of the Labour Government with a thumping majority. It was Churchill's own pride and conceit that brought about his

downfall, and to a great extent his past actions.. The Forces had no trust in him, and they did not fancy him as a Prime Minister during the post-war days.

Lord Shepherd introduced me to Mr. Pinkerton, who was organiser of speakers for the Labour Party. On an average, I addressed three meetings a day all over London, and on the eve of the Poll I was sent to Birmingham. This election was a peculiar one; instead of the party approaching electors, they approached the Party. Never, during my 25 years of Party experience, have I witnessed such an enthusiasm and desire on the part of the electors to hear the speakers. I saw the British electors at their best.

Questions were asked about India, and I remember in the constituency of Major Freeman, who is now the Financial Secretary to the War Office, an elector got up and asked how many white people died of famine. Of course the question answered itself, and many subjects were raised in Birmingham.

I was jubilant over the victory—a dream came true. I worked and toiled for this. I remember an occasion when I had to pawn a suit of clothes to get enough money for travelling to places to address meetings; although the Labour Party believes in paying for their speakers, I made it my policy from the beginning not to accept a penny.

I had two ambitions in my life, and for years I was nursing them. One was to work constantly to get the Labour Party into power, and the other to bring freedom to my country through the Labour Party organisation. To me the achievement of one is closely linked with the other. The greater part of my life was spent with the Labour Movement in England, and with the help of the innumerable workers, I am going to free my country.

In a sense, the Labour Party in the past had no majority in the Parliament, and now they have; and hence there is no excuse whatsoever for either the Ministers or the Party not to carry out the definite declared Party policy on India; my whole life was concentrated on these promises, made time and again, and which I myself, to some extent, helped to formulate. This factor, and another which is equally important—my own economic position—has given me a greater impetus to carry out my ideas and programmes in my own way.

During the time I was laid up in bed, I made little toys for children, and sold them during Christmas. For two years I did this and this enabled me to save a little money, with which I am now able to do what I like for the cause on which I have set my heart.

Prior to 1941 I had to struggle very hard, for over 21 years, to earn a living in England. This curbed to a great extent my activities. All these years I never sought help from anybody. Why should I? If I take up a cause it is for me to work out my own salvation.

Here I must acknowledge with a deep sense of gratitude the continuous moral support given to me by more than half a dozen ladies; I am doubly indebted to them for helping me to maintain my courage and endurance. My own experience of the women of Britain is that they are more tolerant and understanding, and have a better sense of fair play than men.

In my attempt to concentrate all my activities from now onwards to free my country, I wish to make it very clear to all my Labour colleagues that I want an independent India to co-operate with Britain for their mutual benefit. Neither should exploit the other.

Chapter 9

With this determination I started my work at the beginning of August, 1945. I spoke to some of the officials of the Labour Party of this intention, and the first thing I did was to publish a small pamphlet, and this came out at the beginning of September. It was called "My 25 Years with the Labour Movement." Copies of this were sent to the Cabinet Ministers, Members of Parliament and local organisations. Then, from October onwards, I started interviewing Ministers and Members of Parliament. It was I that suggested first to the Lord Privy Seal, Mr. Arthur Greenwood, that a Goodwill Mission should be sent to India. I spent almost every other day in Parliament. This was a very interesting period, for it revealed the various character of different Members of Parliament. To most of them my services for the Labour Party was a revelation; and some of them have written to me to that effect, including the wife of the Secretary of State for India. They never realised, until they went through my pamphlet, the hardships and immense sacrifice I had to go through on behalf of the Party. This impressed them deeply.

Six weeks after the publication of my pamphlet I heard from several sources that my candid and outspoken statement regarding the independence of my country, in the last page of my pamphlet, had caused a certain amount of alarm; but for this I would have been in their inner councils.

This is nonsense: I worked for years to get freedom for my country, and why should I be diplomatic, or be a hypocrite and cloak my feelings? I am, and always will be, an unrepentent ultra patriot, and nothing could change me.

This is what I expressed on the last page of my pamphlet.

"Now for my other ambition. I owe a deep debt of gratitude to my own country, India. The greater part of my life has been spent with the British Labour movement, and with the help of the innumerable workers and leaders of the Party I wish to bring about immediate freedom for my country.

The great mass of the working classes with whom I have been in contact are always ready to fight for my country's freedom

As is the case with any Movement, there are a few, and fortunately very few, in the Party who are Imperially minded and who are averse to any change or progress; these in my experience are complete misfits and their counsel should be ignored.

Ever since the Labour Party was formed its leaders have time and again promised to liberate my people. Many Labour Members of Parliament have incessantly pleaded for my country. I remember on one occasion I was dining with Mr. Neil McLean, who is now regarded as the "father" of the present Parliamentary Labour Party. We were discussing India, and suddenly I rose, glass in hand, and proposed a toast to my country's freedom. He immediately got up and responded. Such sincerity I have witnessed on many occasions from many ardent workers.

Nearly 20 years back I wrote an article in the University of St. Andrews Magazine about the policy that the British Government had been adopting towards India. Not an iota of it has since been changed. The time has passed when Indians will lend themselves to either soft réceptive or deceptive expedients. The Tories exploited the British working classes and ruled them for decades, but I cannot believe that the present Labour Ministers will do the same thing in India. To "divide and rule"

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in India is the simplest and easiest method, and in this the Tories excelled; but to unite India and give her freedom is a nobler task.

The Labour Government need not apologise for any bold policy they adopt in regard to India. They need not even be diplomatic and shelve the matter. The time has passed when we *can ignore the opinion of other countries* in regard to our administration. If we do not set our own house in order we have no right to criticise others. The old diplomatic methods of interfering with countries other than our own should be thrown overboard—I hope for ever.

With courage and boldness the Government can solve the problem at once. The whole world will applaud and a glorious chapter will have been written on British history.”

The Labour Party never dreamed for a moment that they would sweep the country at the Polls. They expected an increase in their representation, but not to such a dimension. Many a Member got in without ever dreaming of doing so. What are they, and how are they shaping? A good many of the Labour Members are young, and this is a very healthy sign. From my knowledge and personal contact, about 37 Labour Members in the Parliament take some interest in Indian affairs; about 20 take a greater interest, and rather less than ten take a deep interest. It is not fair to reveal their identities. In the Lords a few young Peers also are keen on India. Viscount St. David, a charming young man, has discussed with me, and never for a moment stands on any ceremony. Some of the younger Members are keen to learn and know all about India.

A point I wish to mention—and it has been in my mind for a considerable period—is the rigid discipline the Party exercises over its Members. This cripples, and to

some extent stuns the initiative of the momentum of free speech and thinking. By all means have a system that will keep the Members intact, but let them speak out freely at debates. This will do a world of good. Organised debates or speeches lose the flavour of spontaneity, and hence question time in Parliament is always very lively.

I have been visiting the House of Commons for over 20 years, and I have heard from very many Labour Members the same view; if there is a vote of confidence on the Government, then the Labour Members must vote solidly, but on various subjects they should be allowed freedom of speech, even if some of the opinions expressed are not to the liking of the Government.

I will now give a brief description of some of the Members as I saw them in the House of Commons.

Take, for instance, W. G. Cove, the Member for Aberavon—a sturdy, good-looking figure, often to be seen in the Central Lobby. He came up once in a hurry, showing a cutting from an Indian newspaper, immensely pleased with himself. He is definitely a bold exponent of India's freedom, and my country should welcome him.

Then there is Captain J. Bird, another well-wisher of India—one of the younger Members who speaks his mind. He has taken an interest, in India, even before he came to the Parliament.

Our R. W. Sorenson always seems to be in a hurry, but ever ready to speak to any Indian, and never stands on ceremony.

J. A. Sparkes, Member for Acton, could be seen in the cafeteria, invariably eating sausages. I helped him in his election campaign at three different meetings. He is very methodical in his ways, and the House will hear more of him. In his talks with me on India he fears the rich

industrialists will not give a square deal to the working class of India.

Captain J. W. Snow, Member for Portsmouth Central—a tall, distinguished figure, he is the Vice-Chamberlain of the King's Household. He has been to India and likes Malabar and Indian curry.

A. M. Skeffington, the Member for West Lewisham, a studious person, is another regular visitor to the cafeteria. He takes an interest in the Fabian Society, and is very active.

Chapter 10

I could go on describing so many others, but this will be deviating very much from my main subject, so let me get back to the month of November, 1945. I heard and read that the famine in India was gradually taking a deep root, and from the few who had just arrived in England, it looked as if the conditions were getting worse; so I began to collect all the facts concerning the famine.

Just about this time, I went with a deputation to the India Office, to protest against the using of Indian troops in Indonesia, and also to stop the trial of the I.N.A. prisoners. I wound up for the Deputation, and told Mr. Arthur Henderson, the Under-Secretary for India, that I knew his father well, and hoped that he would follow his footsteps, and also that the India Office is notorious in converting any personality that enters its threshold. He assured me and the Deputation that when the Labour Government finishes its term of Office it will bring credit in its administration of India.

1946 I interviewed some of the delegates that came from India on the Food Mission, and from what I had studied

and learned I got alarmed, and then interviewed the Under-Secretary on the 21st February. To be frank, I was very disappointed, and to some extent dismayed, at his attitude. He did not say a word in reply about the food problem. To the other subjects I discussed he was vague and evasive.

I told him, before I took leave of him, that if the famine got worse I would appeal directly to the working class of Britain personally, as I have implicit faith in their justice and judgement.

In the course of the next three months, the famine in India grew worse. Caravans of the hungry were on the move. Eye witnesses, like Thomas and Cudlipp, gave a vivid description of what they had seen and the dreadful scenes that were spreading all throughout India; and when the Home Government was not paying the full attention that it ought to I decided to act.

About the end of May I wrote a very frank letter to the Under-Secretary and told him that I was printing an open letter, to be circulated among the Members of the Labour Party on the Indian famine, and that if an occasion arose I wanted his permission to publish the letter I wrote to him. To this he promptly replied that, although the contents of my letter were true in substance, he would not give consent to my publishing it. I found no reason for his objection, but still I complied with his request. I sent, on the 18th June, an open, printed letter to the Cabinet Ministers, Members of Parliament, and Local Divisions of the Labour Party. Here are a few passages from my letter:

"Famine is not an unknown factor in India. The Government of India and the Home Government neglected to look into this problem before it became chronic. The main causes of the food shortages were: (1) due to the

exportation of food stuffs to the Middle East troops during the war; (2) misrule in India; (3) and the entire British administration structure is linked with the profiteers; the Labour Government has made no change in this structure."

"Government of India, instead of finding water for agricultural purposes, were looking into the skies for months, and in fact for years, for the rain to fall."

"One has to go through the full debate that took place in February of this year in the Central Assembly to find out the mismanagement of the Food Department openly admitted that it cannot even depend upon the agricultural statistics, and on these depend the basic plan of price control and rationing."

"I had the pleasure of meeting in London some of the members of the Food Mission that came from India, and one cannot but regret that, on the whole, the Mission did not even get what was promised to them, and the money spent on them could have fed many thousands of my starving people."

"The famine in India is a legacy of bad management for many years, and to remedy this I beg of you to ask the Government to appoint a selected committee with supreme power to organise the administration of food supplies for the starving millions, and thus avoid the increases in the death roll."

I have given a lengthy quotation from this letter, in order that a vast subject like this shall be presented in a clarified form. I went to Transport House to inform the officials that I intended demonstrating at the Party Conference about the sluggish way the Government was tackling the famine question in India. So away I went to Bournemouth in my car. My demonstration took a novel form. I had all round my car huge placards; written on them were the following sentences:

1. "Save the Indian families whose sons fought so bravely."
2. "India gets 300 calories less than the Italians and Germans."
3. "Lack of foresight from India Office and India Government is the cause of present Indian famine."
4. "Appeal to fellow-members; please save the hungry by acting now."
5. "20 millions will die if you don't act now."
6. "See for yourselves living skeletons, and save them from death."
7. "Millions are dying, through no fault of their own.

Why not save them ?"

These placards had some enlarged photographs of the famine-stricken people that I got specially from India. Pamphlets were distributed as I went round and round the Conference Hall.

This demonstration went on for three days, and had a dramatic effect on the delegates. Ministers, Under-Secretaries, Parliamentary Members and Delegates were all eye witnesses to this appeal, and as a result the standing Committee of the meeting got alarmed, and delegates, especially from Manchester, Leeds and Birmingham, took a lively interest and pressed for a debate on India.

On the 14th morning I was sitting on the side of the fountain outside the Conference Hall with Mr. Neil Maclean, who is regarded as the Father of the present Labour Party Members in the House of Commons. He is a very old friend of mine. While I was talking with him Mr. Herbert Morrison, Lord President of the Council, walked in and created a joke, saying that I was converting Mr. Maclean, and I at once seized this opportunity of *inserting in his top coat pocket one of my printed pamphlets*, and asked him specially to go through it.

Then Miss Wilkinson came to have a chat, and I asked her to read the letter also. Mr. Maclean, after a long discussion, requested me send him a memorandum on the Indian famine, and he promised to bring it before the Labour Members and the Cabinet Committee.

On the same evening things were not going smoothly at the Conference. When a resolution approving the Government's plans for India were moved, towards the end of the Conference, my friend, Arthur Greenwood, the Lord Privy Seal, rose to reply. He was shouted down, and members asked him to sit down. He appealed saying, "Why is there all this suspicion that members of the Government are not playing the game?"

One of the delegates interrupted, and said, "Let the workers have some say in the matter."

The Government had a rough passage during the Indian debate, and my demonstration had definitely roused the delegates.

On my return to London I rang up the India Office and got in touch with the Under-Secretary of State for India. My object in doing this was to consult him on the memorandum that I had to get ready in two days, and the Under-Secretary requested me to submit the memorandum. As I had only a day to do this in I dictated the whole memorandum to the India Office by telephone, and the Under-Secretary replied back at once.

After sending the memorandum to the Chairman of the Parliament Labour Party I saw Lord Shepherd on the 3rd July and had a long talk with him on the subject. He took the detailed particulars and promised to help me. On the 15th I saw Lord Farrington in the House of Lords and discussed with him on the food problem.

In the meantime, I discovered the details of the Government blunder over the food supply to India. This

was a revelation to me. I got hold of this report, sent out from Washington on the 19th of May. Official sources in Washington charged the British Government with the responsibility for the critical food situation in India. The report ran as follows:—

“The sluggish British policy is the largest single factor contributing to the ills in food relief in South-East Asia. Britain’s initial insistence on ‘free rice’ from Siam as War Reparation, and Britain’s admission of the error of that policy which led to wider-spread hoarding, and British procrastination in agreeing to create a tripartite Anglo-Siamese-American Rice Commission to purchase rice for export, delayed by three to five months the exporting of any considerable amount of Siamese rice.”

Americans claimed that they were prepared to create a Tripartite Board on January 26th, but Britain finally agreed only during the month of May, at the same time officially giving up the demand for Free Rice. This, they say, was due to the wrangling in London between the Ministry of Food and banking officials—the latter demanding Free Rice as reparations for bolstering sterling economy.

This startling statement is a revelation to the people of this country, to the world at large and even to Members of Parliament.

Two weeks had passed since I interviewed Lord Shepherd, and as the time was moving fast I thought it best to print a circular narrating the American official report, and send it to the Cabinet and Members of Parliament. At the same time, I decided to approach the two Labour candidates, who were then fighting two bye-elections.

Before I set out on this project I wrote and told Lord Shepherd what I intended doing.

Even at the last moment I wanted to avoid bringing out into the open the whole sufferings of my people outside the Labour Movement, and I was left with no choice. This was most painful to me, and yet I had to do it.

I set out in my car with the loud speaker on the 19th July. This is the most effective way of spreading what you wish to convey to the electors; instead of you requesting them to come to any particular place to attend a meeting you go to their homes directly.

On the 19th July I interviewed Mr. Jay, who was then Private Secretary to the Prime Minister and a Member of the Cabinet Food Committee. He was a candidate in the North Battersea Bye-Election. He was a little abrupt in his ways, and asked me to write and tell him what I wished to be done with regard to the food problem in India.

I wrote a letter straight away, sitting in my car outside his own committee rooms, to save time. My object in approaching him was to get a definite guarantee that he would look into the Indian food problem.

Next day I travelled to Bexhill, where Major Bramall was contesting the seat for the Labour Party. The previous day Mr. Churchill spoke in the same division on behalf of the Conservative candidate. I explained to the Agent, Mr. L. G. Sims, my object in visiting the constituency. I told him if I did not get a satisfactory reply I was going to appeal to the electors on behalf of my poverty stricken people. We had a long discussion, and he appealed to me not to say anything against the Government, as the result of the election might be a very close one.

This sincere appeal moved me, and having the Party's interest at heart, I straight away asked him to put the Labour Candidate's name in my car. I went round the whole constituency, up and down, speaking for three

hours. The agent gave me a letter to Mr. Jay, and promised to send a similar one to Lord Shepherd, about my very sincere and sporting action. In his letter to Mr. Jay, Mr. Sims wrote: "It was Mr. Ram's intention to speak here about the food problem, and the fact might well have been used by the Opposition; I have, however, talked of the wider issue involved, and that he, in his enthusiasm and deep desire to help his people, might well injure the Movement of which he has been a member so long.

He has now gone with his loudspeaker on our behalf, instead of embarrassing us, a fact which is appreciated."

This letter speaks for itself, as Major Bramall got in with a very narrow majority. He might have been beaten had I spoken against the Government for its inactivity with regard to my country's food problem.

However, I never had any intention of speaking against the Labour Movement or the candidate himself. I only wanted the Government to act.

I returned the same evening to Battersea, and Mr. Jay sent me a letter by hand. This letter gave me the clue that I had been searching for. For over three months I had been pressing the Government with all my strength and resources to look into the Indian famine and food supply, and now I had from the very candidate himself, who is a member of the Food Committee, a letter admitting the Government's blunder.

Since he himself is in the Food Committee and is equally responsible for this dreadful blunder—or mistake, as he puts it—he did not want any kind of enquiry into the whole question. Here is part of his letter he wrote to me on the 28th July.

"I agree that a mistake was officially made in seeking 'Free Rice' by the way of reparations from Siam, but this mistake has now been corrected, and supplies are moving,

so that it will not help the people of India to argue further about it. If elected to Parliament I would support all the Labour Government's measures designed to save the Indian people from famine, and any other practical measures which would have the same effect. I have no doubt whatsoever that, having this cause at heart, you will be wise enough to continue your support of the present Government and your valuable work for the Labour Party."

Since this reply was not satisfactory to me I appealed to the electors to see that the Labour candidate takes immediate action, and to get such an assurance from him. I disliked intensely doing this, but my peoples' sufferings come first. I never once asked the electors not to vote for the Labour candidate; all I asked them was to get a guarantee from the candidate that the food question of India must take priority.

In August I printed another leaflet quoting the main substance of Mr. Jay's letter, he being now a Member of Parliament.

Here is the substance of this letter:

"Since November of last year I have been deeply interested in the famine of my country. I interviewed Labour Members of Parliament, the Under-Secretary of State to India, and the Chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party; I appealed personally to the Lord President of the Council, demonstrated at Bournemouth before the Delegates, and got in touch with the Under-Secretary of State for India again; at his own request I sent a memorandum to the Chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party. I discussed with Lord Shepherd and Lord Farrington, and finally appealed to Lord Shepherd to take some immediate and concentrated action, to relieve the immeasurable sufferings of my people who are perishing every hour of every day."

Mr. Douglas Jay, the newly-elected Member of Parliament for Battersea North, and a member of the Cabinet Food Committee confessed in a letter to me that the Government had made a mistake with regard to the food supply to India, and he also asks in the same letter that the Indians should forget this error. This blunder, however, has already caused the loss of millions of lives. He further admits that the food administration in India is not what it should be. On the face of his open admission, why not appoint a special Committee with full power to organise and administer food? What is the Government afraid of? Are they trying to shield someone? Surely this simple request is a logical one?

My work on behalf of India's famine since last November has convinced me more than ever, that if one sets out with determination to achieve a result it can be done.

Whether any improvements in the food supply to India from July onwards from the British Government is due to me or not is immaterial; the fact of it is, I brought out the whole situation persistently to the notice of the Members of Parliament, the Cabinet, and the local organizations. I have made the British Government admit their fault towards the food supply to India. This I consider is most useful and beneficial in making the Cabinet take vigorous steps to improve the food supply.

Chapter II

I also promised to submit a monthly bulletin on Indian affairs to all the members of the Labour Party, including Cabinet Ministers and Members of Parliament. Here is the September Bulletin:

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SEPTEMBER BULLETIN ON INDIA

To the Rank and File of the Labour Party.

Dr. Prasad, the new Food Minister has revealed in his broadcast on the 23rd September, the grave food situation in India within the next two or three months; the failure of crops in India, short allocations of grain from abroad, and non-materialisation of new expected imports from the Argentine, all these have helped to bring about a fresh crisis; all the same the Indians are very grateful to all countries that have come forward to help them at this critical moment; at last I am happy to observe that the British Cabinet is taking a greater interest to feed my starving people.

The grievance of Indian Industrialists has been removed by allowing the import of capital goods and machinery from hard currency countries.

The month will prove an historical one; a great momentous step has been taken in the evolution of Indian Independence; perhaps the most important during the two centuries of the Indo-British connection.

The new Indian Government heralds the dawn of National Freedom and is bound to fashion India's destiny provided the Viceroy and the British Cabinet give it a free hand and act sincerely according to their avowed promises.

And this is followed by the October Bulletin:—

OCTOBER BULLETIN ON INDIA

To the Rank and File of the Labour Party.

The building of new storage of food grains by the Central and Provincial Governments, will prove beneficial. The steady flow of Argentine food supply has greatly helped India.

The ending of controls on ceiling prices and margins of profits on consumer goods, the simplified methods of obtaining import licenses, and relaxing the rigidity of the exchange control—all these will give a stimulus to Indian industries.

Communal troubles have taken an exaggerated form in the B.B.C. News for some unknown reason; even as an item of news, it is boring to hear the same thing four times within ten hours; if, instead, it gave us a detailed account of road accidents in Britain, or even keeps on reminding about them then this will not only benefit the nation, but maintain an increased population.

The seed of discord was continuously being sown for years in India by British officials. *This is recorded in the speeches and writings of Englishmen themselves.*

“‘Divide et impera’ should be the motto of our Indian administration, whether political, civil or military.”

This sentence dates back to 1821, and appeared in the “Asiatic Journal.”

The existence and continuation of this policy has been confirmed by Lt.-Colonel Cooke in 1857, by Lord Elphinstone on May 4th, 1859, by Ramsay Macdonald, three times Prime Minister, in his book, “Awakening of India,” and by Lord Olivier, in 1927.

If this policy was applied assiduously in the past, with success and yielding a big dividend, there is no guarantee that it may not be applied now or in the near future.

But having served so closely with the rank and file of the British Labour Movement I cannot for a moment conceive that the present Labour Cabinet will yield to such an old, well tried temptation. From what I learned the Secretary of State for India, Lord Pethwick Lawrence,

is held high in esteem for his speeches, integrity and sincerity, by Indians.

Indians themselves must solve the communal problem without the slightest interference or help from outsiders however well meaning they might be. It is immaterial what form or shape this takes and it would prove easy if the British Troops are withdrawn.

31st October, 1946.

Published by J.K. RAM.

The main object of my issuing these Bulletins is to make the British Cabinet, the Members of Parliament and the whole Labour Movement to be in touch with the facts about India and also keep on reminding them about the various promises made by Labour Leaders in the past to grant freedom to India.

I am convinced that such continuous reminders is absolutely necessary at the moment.

Now I will try to give my people a running commentary of the public opinion in England on India, since the advent of the Labour Government.

Previous offers to India by various Governments were conditional; namely that you could have your freedom if you agreed among yourselves. This slogan was often repeated, and brought out as a hackneyed excuse ever since the British rule was established in India. It was the definite policy of various British Governments to divide and rule India.

If an Indian makes this statement it may not carry any weight, but let me repeat what the British administrators themselves have said in the past.

As early as 1821, a British Officer (signing himself under Carnaticus) wrote in the "Asiatic Journal": "Divide et impera" should be the motto of our Indian administration, whether political, civil or military."

Lt.-Colonel John Cooke, Commandant at Morodabad, wrote in 1857, "Our endeavours should be to uphold in full force the separations which exist between different races and religions, and not to endeavour to amalgamate them."

Lord Elphinstone, the Governor of Bombay, in a minute dated May 4th, 1859, wrote; "'Divide et impera' was an old Roman motto, and it should be ours."

Ramsay Macdonald, who was Prime Minister of England three times, wrote in his book "Awakening of India," p. 283, "Sinister influences have been, and are, at work on the part of the Government. Mohammedan leaders have been, and are, inspired by British officials; and these pull wires at Simla, and in London, and of malice aforethought sow discord between the Hindus and Mohammedans by showing to the Mohammedans special favours."

In 1927, Lord Olivier, who was himself a Secretary of State for India, wrote in the London "Times"; "None with a close connection with Indian affairs will be prepared to deny that, on the whole, there is a predominant bias in British officialdom in favour of the Moslem community, partly on the ground of closer sympathy, but more largely as a makeweight against Hindu Nationalism."

And lastly, Lt.-Colonel Osborne's enlightening passage in his book called "Must England Lose India?" He asks: "Would the Chief of India Secret Service or Political Service be able truthfully to deny that his department has ever used or condoned the use of 'agents provocateurs,' and that he had never followed Lord Curzon's example, 'Keep others quarrelling.'"

These should convince an average Britisher, if he or she wishes to know the truth of the methods employed to

govern India. I gave out these facts at various meetings in Britain whenever questions on communal problems were raised.

Communal quarrels rarely break out in villages, where nearly 90 per cent of the people live, and where there are no British soldiers or civilians to "keep the peace." Of course, there are usually Indian hirelings who do the actual incitement. I was very much struck when I read, a few months back, about the incident that happened at a college hostel. The students scented that there was going to be trouble in the town between Hindus and Mohammedans, so they organised themselves into groups and went into the city and picketed themselves. This averted any disturbance. If such an action could be done by a few handfuls of students how much more could be accomplished if the mass are enlightened to act in a similar way.

My firm conviction is that when the British leave a solution can be reached without much bloodshed. Whether the present Labour Government will, in due course, succumb to the whole, well-tried policy of divide and rule remains to be seen, but for the moment, and since its advent to power, I have no reason to doubt that its intentions are not sincere in giving freedom to my country.

The "Daily Herald" consistently has been advocating India's cause, and is firmly of the opinion that "India can never play the full part until it has self government."

The calling of the Viceroy for consultation, the sending of a Goodwill Mission to India, the despatch of the Cabinet Mission, the production of the Mission's plan, and finally the setting up at last of a National Government—all these have happened in the course of a short period; a great advance indeed, and we must give credit to the Government.

But India is not out of the woods as yet. The British Governments must be vigilant and see that the reactionary elements, both in Britain and India, are kept at a distance. Each should have one policy, and all through its existence it has to carry out unflinchingly the party's policy towards India ever since its inauguration.

Members of the Cabinet, from the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary, the Minister of Education, Lord Privy Seal, and the Secretary of State for India—everyone of these, have in the past committed themselves to give freedom to India, and it is for them to translate this into action.

Macauley once declared that the date of India's independence would be the most splendid moment in the History of the British Empire. Let the Prime Minister make this the moment, and prove to the whole world that he meant what he said on becoming Prime Minister—that India has to play her full part in working out the new world order.

In the new world order India is bound to play a great part in the political and economical affairs of the world. Commercial association between Britain and India can accrue mutual benefits. The permanent basis must be mutual interests and not exploitation.

Chapter 12

Freedom comes from within and not from without, and with this in view I am now appealing to my countrymen and women. For over two hundred years we have been slaves. What are we lacking in? Is it culture? Is it civilisation, or is it valour? All these we possess in abundance. What we lack is unity.

I do not intend preaching here. But I am begging with all my heart for my people to unite; and this is the main issue before every Indian patriot, and the chief task of our national movement.

This is a grave hour in the life of our nation. The differences of the past must be buried.

Hindus and Moslems, let us shake hands and be true brothers and sisters. We are sons and daughters of the same soil, and our religions do not teach us to hate and fight against one another. Why should we be at logger-heads and be permanent slaves ?

When the British bayonets are withdrawn we can show the whole world that we can settle our differences. The classification of men by creeds crystallised in various electorates is the work of a foreign rule. Does it matter, in the modern world, whether a Hindu rules a Moslem or vice versa ?

This miserable, hateful feud is nothing but a scramble for jobs. The hour is crucial, and let a spirit of brotherhood inspire and galvanise us into action. Let our national liberation take the form of a People's movement. We have been too long an enslaved nation.

Outside and inside India we have no status. Small nations point their fingers at us and say what cowards we are. When I went to get a visa recently I was asked by one of the foreign consuls how much longer would I need a British passport. There are a handful of Englishmen ruling over millions and millions, like a flock of sheep.

Let us not be a degraded and insulted people. Let us resolve into a prepared and fearless nation. Let our

courage rise with danger, and heroism with resolve. Let us rise above our petty obstacles, low and selfish habits. Let us fling off the fetters of prejudice, bigotry and egotism. By doing all this we automatically become united. In the name of heroic virtues that make life illustrious, let us translate our thoughts into action. Then our eyes will flash and our hearts throb at the dawn of national freedom. We never felt the pride, the glory and the dignity of independence before, and now we are on the threshold of achieving it.

India's patriots have the supreme honour at the moment to shape our people and the destiny of the world. Sons and daughters of India, arise! Let us march with full confidence and make this as a historical mission, and in the end we will win, and become a full-blooded nation.

That is my firm conviction.

Appendix

Certain important events have taken place since this book was sent to the printers, that I find it necessary to deal with them now.

First is the visit of the Indian Leaders to London last December. What was the motive of the British Cabinet to summon them? Why was this conference held?

I have consistently held brief and defended the actions of the Labour Government since its formation, both inside and outside England; I have displeased a good many of my own countrymen by such an action. I have done so with the fullest conviction and belief that the Labour Cabinet is doing its best to hand over the power to Indians, and I have expressed so in my previous bulletins. But the London conference has revealed a touch of the past history of the British rule in India. This is confirmed by Mr. Ghazanfar, Health Minister, when he said to the pressmen, "The Prime Minister's statement was a great tactical victory for the Muslim League." From all correspondence revealed to the public, it is clear, the Prime Minister, the Viceroy and the Indian leaders all knew beforehand that no useful result will come out of the conference. *Then why was this conference held?* To any intelligent person it reveals a flavour of publicity evidently for home and foreign consumption. Was it meant to convince the people at home and abroad that the British Government wants to hand over the power to Indians, but they don't agree among themselves?

Pandit Nehru before he came to England sent the following message: "A brief visit now to England cannot bear fruit; it is likely to have a contrary result." Mr. Jinnah's cable to the Prime Minister ran as follows:

“ Unless it is open to us to discuss the whole situation it would be of no use going to London,” and in spite of these messages the conference was called. All for what? To clarify the clauses contained in the Cabinet mission's plan.

Why did the Cabinet mission leave this loop-hole? Why did they allow the various interpretations and even go to the extent of His Majesty's Government taking legal advice?

Even the new interpretation about the voting in sections by a simple majority might be utilised to defeat the other important and vital provisions of the Cabinet mission's plan and endanger the whole constitution.

The statement of the Prime Minister in Parliament tends to indicate that he wishes to keep all the strings in his own hands and pull them in an arbitrary way. *This is a far cry from Mr. Attlee's previous statement that a minority cannot veto the advance of a majority.*

Then, the sad and untimely death of Miss Wilkinson. I knew her well. I remember her moving speech, at a meeting in Kingsway Hall, soon after her return from India. With a Lathy in her right hand she demonstrated the typical British Rule that existed then in India. Her admiration of Pandit Nehru even went to the extent of having his portrait on her mantelpiece and this drew a tremendous amount of laughter among the audience. Decidedly India has lost an ardent well-wisher and a noble advocate of my country's freedom.

Finally comes the historic statement of the Prime Minister in the Parliament. For years I have witnessed the debates on India. Often this gave me the impression,

that they were pre-arranged ones, but the statement made in February stands by itself; naturally this is the outcome of a definite policy advocated by the Labour movement in their annual conferences. I myself had the unique pleasure of helping the delegates to formulate such a policy in the years 1926-27.

While welcoming such a pronounced policy, I am doubtful of the outcome of the appointment of a serviceman as Viceroy at this particular juncture. Between now and June of next year, the affairs of India require statesmanship and exceptional foresight. Indians on the whole would have welcomed the present Secretary for India for this post, as he is liked by both the political parties.

The Prime Minister's statement was a clear decision and this will create a goodwill and permanent friendship between the two countries, provided the manner in which the British rule is liquidated: this should be done in accordance with the spirit of the declaration as understood by the rank and file of the British Labour Party. As the statement stands, the actual methods of transferring power in the hands of India are vague and confusing. It promotes party rivalries and this will ensure for Britain the position of an arbitrator. If the power is to be handed over, after a certain period, then why not clearly state or set the machinery in motion from now onwards.

In the first place, if the power is not handed over to a central government, but to several provincial governments, this will positively destroy the political unity, even before Britain quits India.

Secondly, the statement of the Prime Minister tends to a reversal of the two basic postulates on which the two countries were negotiating all along: the first is the

principle that Britain should not choose any particular government when she leaves India, and the second, which is most important is, that India should have a government devised by her own people.

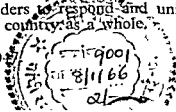
The clauses contained in the declaration does not give any impetus for co-operation among the various communities; instead they place a great premium on conflicts, among the people.

At one stroke the announcement sabotages the sovereign and autonomous rights of the constituent assembly, which is the chief feature of the Cabinet mission's plan. In doing this, the British Government definitely failed to implement the mission's plan and scrapped also its own pronouncement, and thereby forfeits its reputation of straight dealing; I am positive this is not what the British Cabinet intended doing, or meant to convey; at any rate the rank and file of the British Labour movement will not readily approve of such a policy, or action.

At the present juncture there is only one thing to do; the Labour Cabinet should stick to its original policy and back the constituent assembly, especially now that the Indian princes are also willing to take part in it. As an elected body this should be given the sovereign rights to tackle the problems of India.

Whatever may be the outcome of the British Cabinet's action, it is for the Indians at this grave hour to unite. As matters stand, there will be neither Hindustan nor Parkistan. The very gravity of the situation should force the Indian political parties to come together. It is for the Indian leaders to respond and unite in the supreme interest of the country as a whole.

31st May, 1947



J. K. RAM.

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